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ABSTRACT

Throughout the history of education in America, curricula have been expanded to meet individual and societal needs. There has been and will continue to be exploration of issues concerning the future of education. Four issues that have emerged in the 1980's are consumarism, privatism, technology, and quality of life. A "consumer" approach to education could mean that curriculum would change according to popular trends or whims and that public education could become fragmented, aimless, and weak. The growing trends toward censorship and creationism pose new challenges to educators and education. There are attempts to search for and destroy those elements within the public schools that promote the development of free, inquiring minds. However, there is value to be gained from any form of instruction that acquaints students with a moral philosophy and which forces them to think carefully and rigorously about problems. Technology in education, referred to as the silicon era, need not be demeaning, limiting, or dangerous to free will; it can be used to release human energy for the improvement of mankind. Educators are challenged by the need to integrate the microcomputer into a curriculum that meets educational objectives while retaining humanity. Quality of life for students, teachers, and society entails the health and wellness of the individual as essential to a fully, satisfactorily functioning social order. (JD)

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THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

From the early days of our Republic, education has been part of an American Dream of upward mobility as well as a route for preserving the best ideals of humankind. From the Old Deluder Satan Act of 1642 and 1647 through the Truman Commission Report on Higher Education in 1947 there has been an expanded role for education in extending more opportunities for ever more of the populace. The Old Deluder Satan Acts provided a common learning base for citizens while the Truman Commission Report expanded that base from public elementary and secondary schools through the Community College. Throughout the history of American Education, there has been unity within diversity represented in the stress on education with an expanded curriculum to meet individual needs. There has been and will continue to be exploration of issues concerning the future of education. Four issues for the 1980's and beyond are discussed in this paper - consumerism, privatism, technology or the silicon era and quality of life.

Consumerism

Gerald M. Reagan[1] in a recent article "Contemporary Constraints on Academic Freedom" stresses the importance of freedom to teach whatever inquiry shows to be warranted as well as the traditional concepts of freedom from demands that certain doctrines or views not be taught or researched. He underlined some threats

SP 021 267

to freedom to teach including extremes of student consumerism based on popularity, and marketing concepts. Reagan also finds vocationalism with a deemphasis on general education a threat to universities as a marketplace of ideas where scholars examine, criticize and judge one's work.

Faculty within Colleges of Education are often confronted with fragmentation of aims, methods and values with leadership pushing whatever seems popular or currently fundable. Once interest starts to decline in an area, there are attempts to build empires, eliminate required core courses in Foundations of Education, and to erect turf defenses. Bandwagonism reflected in anti-intellectual movements often become a factor in our educational efforts. John Rich[2] in "The Libertarian Challenge to Public Education" notes the growing power of Libertarianism in politics and education. Rich notes the focus of Libertarians on parental choice of schools for their children. The end result may be a weakening of ligatures or bonds and linkages such as forefathers, nation and community, according to Rich. He further notes that ligatures give meaning to the place an individual occupies providing an anchoring and foundation for action. Rich notes that ligatures without options would be oppressive while options without ligatures would be meaningless. There is a sense in which history repeats itself as noted in the 17-19th century focus on Laissez Faire. The concept stressed the importance of freedom to be left alone from government interference and freed from any form of taxation to support public education. The Libertarians in their emphasis on students choice of being educated

in the home, public, private or parochial schools are but a step removed from resistance to universal, free public education for all citizens. In the larger sense there is a threat to democracy with its underlying pluralistic philosophy of education based on open, critical, and rigorous test and retest of ideas in the marketplace.

Privatism

The growing thrust of censorship and creationism based on a strong belief in rightness of dogmatic positions poses new challenges to educators and education. Although many advocates of forms of privatism are responding to their experience with public schools by being wary consumers[3] others are engaging in a three fold mission. First, there are attempts to search for and destroy those elements within the public schools that promote the development of free, inquiring minds. Second, there are efforts to limit and control the learning materials in public school classrooms and libraries through censorship and third, steps are being supported to inject in the public classroom fundamentals of the Bible with creationism as the beginning.[4] Jonathan A. Stein[5] notes the importance of political activism for educators to create an awareness of threats to public education and democracy of by-tyrannical groups. The efforts, he suggests, should include organizing and counter-attacking at those points where power lies and decisions are made in order not to allow the underpinnings of America's open society to be destroyed by apathy. Kenneth A. Strike[6] notes that the conflict

between private values and public schools cannot be resolved to the degree that public schools dominate the educational process.

> To the degree that education equals public schooling parents will desire public schools to express their fundamental values, for failure to do so is the failure to communicate these values at all. Yet public institutions cannot legitimately promote private values.... Private values should therefore be promoted by private means.[7]

The reiteration of the philosophy of separation of church and state will be debated, challenged and continued through the decade of the 80's and beyond. Questions of dealing with values while maintaining neutrality and avoiding indoctrination in public education is difficult but might be dealt with in teaching how to reason about values.[8] Throughout the levels of the educational system there is value to be gained from any form of instruction that acquaints students with a rich literature in moral philosophy and forces them to think carefully and rigorously about enduring human problems.[9]

Technology and the Silicon Era

R. Buckminster Fuller[10] in Synergetics 2 suggests that as a consequence of the myriad of more-with-less, invisible, technological advances of the 20th century, and employing only well-proven technologies and already mined and ever more copiously recirculating materials, it is now technically feasible to retool and redirect world industry in such a manner that within 10 years we could have all of humanity enjoying a sustainably higher standard of living--with vastly increased degrees of freedom--than has been enjoyed by anyone in all of history. He further

suggests that politics and warring are obsolete and invalid. Buckminster finds that less than one percent of humanity knows of the option for a design revolution providing for a new and lasting epoch of physical success for all. He notes there does not have to be world politics and competition for the right to live. Thus in the larger sense our greatest bonds are those that are self imposed. There is a need for a paradigm shift from policies of limits to a new language. This language entails synergy, and possibility. Compromise between alternative scenarios for the improvement of human existence requires rethinking the potential of synergy or what Fuller refers to as the behavior of whole systems unpredicted by any part of the system as considered separately.

> The eternally regenerative Universe is synergetic. Humans have been included in this cosmic design as local Universe information gatherers and local problem-solvers in support of the integrity of the eternal, 100 percent efficient, self-regenerative system of the Universe. In support of their cosmic functioning humans were given their minds with which to discover and employ the generalized laws governing all physical and metaphysical, omniinteraccommodative, ceaseless, intertransformings of the Universe.[12]

There is inherent in this view of humankind as problem solvers and information gatherers a perception of persons who would rather take their chance in an open world than be guaranteed in a closed world.[13] The language of the future encompasses possibility and freedom. Dewey[14] noted that what we want is possibilities open in the world not in the will, except as will or deliberate activity reflects the world.

> To forsee future objective alternatives and to be able by deliberation to choose one of them and thereby weight its chances in the struggle for future existence, measures our freedom...
>
> We do not use the present to control the future. We use the foresight of the future to refine and expand present activity. In this use of desire, deliberation and choice, freedom is actualized.[15]

Aristotle wrote of the Golden Mean referring to a sense of balance in human existence. It is important to gain a proper perspective of the needed balance between technology and human values. Technology need not be demeaning or limiting or dangerous to free will. Rather technology can be used to release human energy for the improvement of humankind. The silicon era is creating an information revolution. Further, throughout the 1980's and into the 21st century there will be infrastructural changes due to the advances in computer technology. Displaced workers have resulted from a changing workplace due to robots, advanced information design systems and an emerging post industrial society. Steps are now being explored entailing human recycling. General Motors, the United Auto Workers, the State of California; UAW-Ford Development and Training Center in Dearborn, Michigan, and Congressional legislation for job retraining all represent awareness of and responsiveness to the problem of retraining workers for the decade of the 1980's.[16] New bridges are being built between business and the public schools. In what is known as the Boston Compact, there is a stipulation that if schools improve the quality of their students, local businesses will agree to hire them.[17] Inherent in this plan is a uniform curriculum with recognition of the influence of

the technological changes on society. The plan in addition is designed to enhance the quality of life of teachers through providing tangible evidence of appreciation and support. Superintendent Robert R. Spillance has stimulated the development of Teacher Excellent Award Programs through some nine $6,500 awards in each of the city's nine school districts each year. There is a clear awareness of the relation of Boston's economic health to new employees supplied through the schools system.

While some see danger of escapism in the Computer Era through fascination with computers; space and space exploration; video games and T.V., and Video Art[18] others like Fuller note the possibilities of an information age. Senator Hatch[19] notes that a tiny slice of silicon is capable of storing thousands of items of information (bits) on a wafer too small for the naked eye to see. He notes the limitless possibilities of codifying and storing information in memory systems whose space requirements are defined in terms of square inches instead of buildings. Such vast retrieval capabilities will allow for the discovery and creation of new knowledge at a vastly increased rate. These advances of science and technology may bring about elevated visions of the future. As Bertrand Russell noted:

> I see before me a shining vision; a world where none are hungry, where few are ill, where work is pleasant and not excessive, where kindly-feeling is common, and where minds released from fear create delight for eye and ear and heart. Do not say this is impossible. It is not impossible...[20]

Human interface with technology requires maximum effort to assure the human potential for economic and social justice and

to protect society from misuse of the power of a computer based information system. Starting from basic assumptions of a humane social order with an open door to a future of choice and increased options, freedom would have an opportunity at least to become a new categorical imperative. This imperative would be built on a foundation of honoring people. This freedom as Morrill[21] notes in Teaching Values In College is not only freedom from casual control or corercion, but also the fundamental capacity for human initiative and self determination. He further finds this freedom constitutes the human power to change or master a situation, to overcome limits through truth and knowledge, action and creativity, and to relate and be present to another person. Educators need to be aware of the dangers of using computers with their ability to increase information in order to assure the quality of that information as well as its applicability to an educational problem or need. Far too often administrators and technology advocates get carried away with the technique, forgetting the purpose of advanced information systems is the improvement of instruction as well as assistance in improving decision making. Two errors may be made. First, advanced computer systems may become an end in themselves siphoning funds, staff and faculty from regular programs of instruction. In fact it is entirely possible such misapplication of technology within education systems could lead to laying off teachers and faculty in traditional programs and hiring additional staff to deal with computer maintenance and information systems.

In this case, as in all cases of empire building, every effort would be made by technology advocates to eliminate all common core, foundations courses and replace them with courses designed to train students in computer usuage. The second error that is often made by administrators is the assumption that if a great deal of quantifiable data is collected, the resulting information will be correct and useful in decision making. Far too often, piles of data are collected merely to fill out current data banks. Such procedures yield readily to garbage in-garbage out. John Dewey saw clearly the importance of balance in human - technology interface. He wrote in Science of Education:

> Moreover, even if it be true that everything which exists could be measured -- if only we knew how -- that which does not exist cannot be measured. And it is no paradox to say that the teacher is deeply concerned with what does not exist. For a progressive school is primarily concerned with growth, with a moving and changing process, with transforming existing capacities and experiences; what already exists by way of native endowment and past achievement is subordinate to what it may become. Possibilities are more important than what already exists, and knowledge of the latter counts only in its bearing upon possibilities.[22]

Also worthy of note is the caution Dewey raised about standardization.

> Our emotional life is quick, excitable, undiscriminating, lacking in individuality and in direction by intellectual life. Hence, the externality and superficiality of the American soul; it has no ultimate inner unity and uniqueness - no true personality.
>
> The marks and signs of this 'impersonalization' of the human soul are quantification of life, with its attendant disregard of quality; its mechanization and the almost universal habit of esteeming technique as an end, not as a means, so that organic and intellectual life is also 'rationalized' and finally standardization.[23]

Yet, with proper perspective high-tech knowledge will be essential for the decade of the 80's and beyond. There is currently a call for a new Morrill Act to include a billion-dollar federal program matched by industry to upgrade science and engineering training.[24] Some experts estimate the knowledge intensive high-tech industries are expected to trail only energy in size by the year 2000.[25] There will be a national effort to enhance both the quality of training and the number of professionals in fields of math and science at the High School level and engineering and technology at the University level. Robert M. Fano[26] in an M.I.T. study just released, finds that in the fast developing engineering and computer science field, a major innovation comes along every four or five years with an average of one totally new subject introduced every year. The result he notes is that after four years a student is slightly obsolete. Reinforcing the M.I.T. study is a massive effort by U.S. companies to drive, through research and development, to thinking computers.[27] In mid-August for example the Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation was launched as a consortium by a number of U.S. semiconductor and computer manufacturers.[28] A number of other companies in the computer field are developing their own research and development corporations to keep abreast of fast moving developments. The implications for educators are clear. There will be a need to commit large resources to maintain up-to-date computer support systems for instruction and administrative decision making. There will be a need however to protect funding

for existing programs. Educators are challenged by the need to integrate the microcomputer into a curriculum that meets its objectives while retaining its humanity.[29] Paul Houts in The Myth of Measurability suggests alternatives to excesses of standardized measurement procedures and channels for humanizing data gathering within educational systems.[30] These alternatives include interviews with parents, teachers and students; records of students works; teachers periodic assessment of student work and broadening the base of observations. The silicon era properly utilized, will assist educators in humanizing their efforts by releasing them from routine time consuming record keeping, and data gathering and interpretation.

Quality of Life

There is clear evidence that teachers are leaving the profession as well as indicating they would not choose teaching as a career if they had to do it over again.[31] Demographers are finding that the 1980's will be a decade of frustrated employees with thwarted goals.[32] Recycling, retrenchment and reallocation of resources appear to be part of the future of educators unless there are some system breaks. (unforeseen or unexpected events) The Phi Delta Kappa 1982 Gallup Poll[33] reflects the various economic and social pressures facing educators as lack of discipline heads the list of major problems confronting schools followed by lack of financial support and use of drugs. Weiler[34] finds the decline of public confidence in all levels of government institutions is related to serious and growing doubts as to whether the state is willing to or capable of adequately responding to needs to society. Since schools are state institutions, Weiler

finds that even if there were improved SAT scores and decreased vandalism, with cynicism about public authority at an all time high, the overall assessment of public education would be unlikely to improve. Dewey insightfully assessed the challenge for the future:

> The significant thing is that the loyalties which once held individuals, which gave them support, direction, and unity of outlook on life, have well-nigh disappeared. In consequence, individuals are confused and bewildered. It would be difficult to find in history an epoch as lacking in solid and assured objects of belief and approved ends of action as is the present.... Individuals vibrate between a past that is intellectually too empty to give stability and a present that is too diversely crowded and chaotic to afford balance or direction to ideas and emotion.[35]

Confronting this multitude of pressures from an increasingly fragmented society will require the best efforts of all of us. That such efforts are being made is seen in concern and interest in quality of life studies, activities and procedures for the workplace. Arthur G. Wirth[36] seeks a new agenda item for the future encompassing quality of life. He includes Schumacher's[37] three functions of a good humane society and workplace: giving a person a chance to utilize and develop his or her faculties; enabling persons to overcome egocenteredness by joining with other people in a common task; and bringing forth goods and services for a becoming existence. There is a need for a paradigm shift to place priority on human meaningfulness. This shift, applicable to all institutions, has special relevance for educators. Quality of life entails health, wellness of the individual as essential to a fully, satisfactorily functioning social order. The strength of our Democracy lies in the health of its citizens. Static outmoded responses to social problems are no longer

sufficient. Caution must be exercised to avoid hardening of the categories. Stress and burnout are reflections of an inadequate social system. Thus there needs to be a rethinking of language to include the absolute value of human beings in both theory and practice. To reach this goal boundaries must be overcome and interdependence among peoples must be achieved. This holistic vision requires anticipatory planning by educators. Such planning ideally ought to include principles of fairness, impartiality and justice. If we are concerned with economic and social justice, Americans must take their social ideology seriously enough to form education decisions in accordance with it.[38] In the long run we have to rely on our leaders, colleagues and peers to act with compassion, justice and intelligence in meeting the challenges of a paradigm shift. History teaches us that our best and worst expectations of the future seldom come to pass. We can create new technological eras but must work more diligently in creating, maintaining and existing in a humane social order. A humane social order, as Bertrand Russell noted[39] is a possible choice for humans. He suggests as Fuller that we could in a generation produce a population almost wholly free from disease, malevolence, and stupidity with universal health, freedom, happiness, kindness and intelligence. Futurists strive for anticipatory planning to enhance the quality of choices for a more humane existence. Right where we are - right here - right now - is the place to start to resolve the issues of the 1980's discussed in this paper. This can be done through our choice and our decision to create and implement a new categorical imperative - to honor people. In the degree to which this is done, can we reformulate economic, political and social priorities to free individuals from limitation and enhance the quality of life for humankind.

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